

**India's assistance in IT expertise and Rand D to ASEAN**

2690. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that he had offered India's assistance in IT expertise and R and D to ASEAN nationals during ASEAN nations meeting;

(b) if so, the details of the discussions held; and

(c) what was the reaction of the various nations that attended the meeting?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. India has offered to increase cooperation in the Information Technology sector with the ASEAN countries at the 33rd ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences held in Bangkok on 28-29 July, 2000. India also suggested that India and ASEAN should work with each other on the uses of Information Technology for Development.

India and ASEAN already have a broad-based programme of cooperation in Science and Technology, which includes Information Technology, Bio-technology, Advanced Materials, etc. Cooperation in Information Technology has included training in India for candidates from the ASEAN countries. Cooperation in Electronics and Information Technology will be overseen by a Sub-group under the ASEAN-India Working Group on Science and Technology. Collaboration with ASEAN in Science and Technology also aims to address two major areas of mutual interest, namely, food security and bio-diversity. India has also stressed the importance of evolving a strategy for commercialising the technologies and processes developed under various ASEAN-India cooperative projects.

(c) India's commitment to work with ASEAN, and our proposals to intensify cooperation in various fields including Information Technology, was met with an enthusiastic response from the ASEAN countries.